



# Cover just two, or maybe three main points.

*We* like sending a mother home from the WIC appointment with *all* of our *best ideas*. But often that's not really what we need to do!

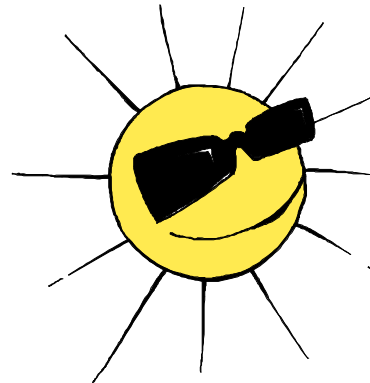
## Think of the human brain as a big file cabinet!

Information has to be filed with other similar information for us ever to be able to find it again. This takes time. In a sense, we have to pull out the file and see what else is in it.

We have to connect and integrate new information with what we already know.

If we get overwhelmed with too much, we give up. Two or three concepts seem to

be about as much as we can file at one sitting.



*If you have developed a heavily information- centered style of counseling, you may be wearing yourself out. Cut back and see if your job isn't more satisfying.*

We'd be more **effective** if we would train ourselves to really limit the number of things we cover and then cover those fewer things in **better depth**.

People process things better and remember them better if they don't feel overwhelmed with information.

Carefully choose what points to make. Since people remember best if they are really interested in something, such as solving a problem, information that you can relate to the *participant's* concerns has the best chance of being remembered. ("I don't know what to do. He won't eat anything I cook.")

Information that relates mainly to *your* concerns may only be marginally interesting, like the fact that the child's height for age is below the 5th percentile. ("Everybody in our family is short . . . What I'm worried about is the fact that he won't eat.")

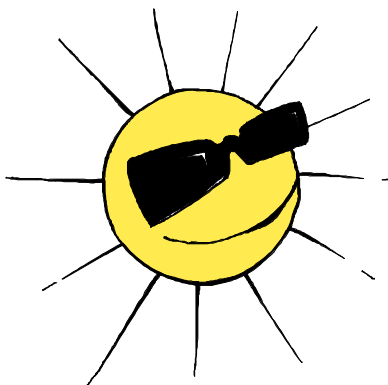
**The first and last information we were exposed to are the things we remember best.** This is all the more reason not to put a lot of points in between; all those points we make in the middle may not have a great chance of being remembered anyway!

So let's say we stick to two or three main points. What is a main point? You could have a lively debate about this with your co-workers. Perhaps the simplest definition of a main point is something you hope the participant will remember or do.

But what if you are like so many of us and you want to share much more than two or three main points? One thing you could do to train yourself from telling everything you know is to make a little mark on a scrap of paper as each main point comes up. Once you make three marks, STOP!

After that, use repetition to help the participant remember. Hearing the same points put a little differently can really help a person learn.

Another thing you could do is write down your main points for the participant or circle them with a marker on a handout. This will



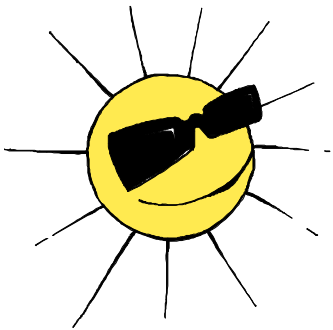
*"The secret of being a bore  
is to tell everything."*

La Rochefoucauld

help them remember but don't use this as an excuse for overloading people with information! A few well-chosen points is still the way to go.

Keeping your messages to a few points has benefits for you as well as the participant. You won't feel so compelled to "cover it all" and you won't be so worn out at the end of the day.

Also, you'll be more likely to get more feedback from participants that you have been helpful, because they haven't been overwhelmed with information. Limiting the number of messages or things-to-do is a win-win situation for both of you.



## The challenge

for the nutrition educator is to make nutrition education . . .

- personal
- relevant
- realistic
- interesting
- positive
- empowering
- action-oriented
- holistic

(. . . all in about 5 minutes, with the baby crying!)

**Few staff are trained to handle the emotional problems which are encountered in a public health program. Many compensate for this by 'over-counseling,' offering too much advice for the client to handle at one time.**

# ACTIVITIES to do before Discussion

## Cover just two, or maybe three, main points

The focus of these activities is to help you become aware of how many main points you incorporate into your sessions.

1. ***What do you think of this statement?*** "Few staff are trained to handle the emotional problems which are encountered in a public health program. Many compensate for this by 'over-counseling,' offering too much advice for the client to handle at one time."

Do you think this might apply to you? Are you aware sometimes of being overwhelmed by the number and kinds of things people need help with? Do you feel like a social worker sometimes?

It may help you cut back on how much you tell people if you are aware that this tendency we have to tell people everything we know comes from a great desire to help in some way. Maybe the way we can help best is by being more self-disciplined in limiting our messages. Think about it.

2. ***For one clinic, make checks on a scrap of paper as you make points you want the participant to remember or to do.*** What is your average number of checks?

Then, in your next clinic, consciously stop at three checks, one check for each thing you hope she remembers or does. Is it awkward? Do you still have more to say? If so, where can you cut back? What points are your highest priority? Think about it. Be prepared to share your experiences with your supervisor or in a staff discussion group.

### *A nutrition education message is more likely to be effective if it:*

- addresses the most pressing nutritional problem or the problem the participant is most interested in
- is simple
- is specific (answers what? how? when?)
- relates to the participant's knowledge and skills, suggests small changes in habits
- repeats important points
- is consistent with previous counseling and with what other health care providers are saying

Idaho WIC Aide Training Manual

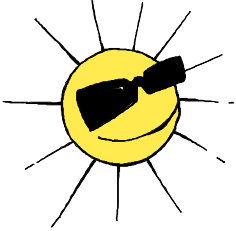
3. ***Analyze your messages.*** How do they compare to these guidelines? It's hard to really analyze your messages as you say them. How about tape recording yourself in clinic? Then listen to the tape with these guidelines in hand. How do your messages stack up? (Sure you can tape record! Just tell the participant why you're doing it and get her permission. Then put the recorder off to the side and ignore it. Nobody else needs to hear it. Don't bring it to the Discussion Group. This is just a way for you to hear yourself objectively.

Thinking about and doing these Activities will prepare you for the discussion. Complete the Activity Worksheet as you practice these activities.

**Activity Worksheet**  
**Bright Ideas - Unit 5**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Cover just two, or maybe three, main points****How many check marks or points did you make on an average for one client?****List the types of appointments or topics when you may provide the client with too much information:****What have you done to limit the information you provide clients?****List three ways you have found to identify the two or three most important nutrition issues after you have reviewed the nutrition questionnaires, the growth chart, and the client's diet:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Give examples of how and when you have changed the main issues after listening to the client's issues or concerns:**

Discuss these ideas with your supervisor or in a staff discussion group. These activity pages and a discussion are to be done for completion of the module.